



Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo
Vice Mayor Herrera
Councilmember Kalra
Councilmember Oliverio
Councilmember Jones

**SUBJECT: COUNCIL PRIORITY SETTING
PROCESS**

DATE: May 8, 2015

Approved: _____

Date: _____

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the staff recommendation with the following modifications:

1. Merge the Semiannual Process with the Early Consideration Process, to simplify the decisionmaking structure, to ensure that Council understands that there will be a semiannual prioritization, and that proposals can be brought to the Rules Committee for consideration on any week.
2. Require "Staff Analysis" to occur at the first Rules Committee hearing after a Council memo is released.
3. Allow staff to use department-specific thresholds for assessing workloads, so long as those thresholds for more constrained departments (e.g, 20 hours for PBCE, 30 hours for CAO, 50 hours for all others), are clearly and publicly articulated.
4. Require staff's workload analysis be performed by the first Rules Committee meeting after the filing of the memo, and (b) add a "red light" category to the existing "green light" and "yellow light" responses by Staff at Rules, to indicate where Staff recommends against moving forward with a specific proposal, such as where a proposal clearly violates existing federal or state law, where it contradicts established Council policy which Staff believes affirms, or where the issue does not lie within the City's jurisdictional authority.
5. Clarify that regardless of the Staff's classification of an item, the Rules Committee--and the Council--retain the authority to accept or reject the Staff recommendation. The Rules Committee will also continue to have the authority to direct Council or a relevant Committee to consider those items where the urgency of the issue can be uniquely, clearly, and objectively established by Staff and the Committee, such as with a Governor's Declaration of Emergency, or where the City risks severe sanction for delay, or some similar indication of unique time-sensitivity and importance.
6. Require that any priorities adopted by the City Council receive at least five votes of its members before work can commence, and to ensure that any eventual proposal has a

likelihood of being adopted by the full Council. Staff should allocate additional votes to councilmembers to ensure sufficient opportunity for new proposals to make the list.

7. Install a requirement that the City Manager's response to Reports of the City Auditor also incorporate a green/yellow/red process to identify for Council which items can be readily implemented, and which will require more extensive work (and prioritization).
8. Amend this Spring's process to ensure that the Council is required to prioritize those 18 items within the existing lists of "Active Priorities" and "Recently Added Priorities" described in Attachment B, in addition to any new items that might be added. Items will remain on the lists, but should be prioritized to ensure Staff has clear direction in allocating its effort.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the priority-setting session is to ensure that staff time and resources are focused on the Council's --and our residents'-- highest priorities. Examples abound in past years of long-awaited solutions blessed by Council action long-ago but never implemented, due to workload constraints exacerbated by a flurry of competing proposals that leaves some "lost in the shuffle."

Although the City's budget and fiscal outlook has begun to stabilize, we still have a city staff that remains roughly a quarter (28%) smaller than it was fifteen years ago, and the City's population and needs have only grown in that time. To retain the flexibility and resources to rebuild essential city services, we must ensure we align City staff time to our highest-priority, core efforts.

With a better designed process, we can ensure that this prioritization happens while still ensuring that the Council can routinely "weigh in" to address new community needs and issues. This proposal, combined with the Staff's good work, seeks to alter those elements in the existing process widely viewed as sclerotic.